

III.—*List of the Birds observed in the Islands of Malta and Gozo.*

By CHARLES A. WRIGHT.

THE following birds, with a few exceptions which are noted, have been observed by me in Malta and the adjacent islands during the last ten or twelve years. As no complete catalogue of the birds of Malta has appeared since that published by Signor Schembri in 1843*, and as in the lapse of twenty years new facts have come under observation and mistakes become apparent, I have thought a fresh list might prove useful. In this will be found 30 species† not contained in that of Schembri. These raise the total to 253 species, considering the Sparrows of Malta as belonging to one species (*Passer salicicola*), and the *Motacilla cinereocapilla* and *M. melanocephala* of Bonaparte as varieties of *M. flava* of Linnæus. Only ten or twelve species are resident, that is, remain with us all the year round, Malta being merely a resting-place for birds in their periodical migrations across the Mediterranean.

From Schembri's list should be omitted *Vanellus gregarius* and *Fringilla amadava*, both of which were erroneously included, the former on information from ignorant persons, and the latter from the fact of two examples having been taken in Malta many years ago, but which were doubtless escaped captives. *Perdix petrosa*, Lath., noticed by Temminck and Savi, and *Perdix fran-*

* Catalogo Ornitologico del Gruppo di Malta, da Antonio Schembri. Malta, 1843.

† These are—

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| 1. <i>Aquila nævia</i> . | 11. <i>Anthus cervinus</i> . | 20. <i>Arenaria calidris</i> . |
| 2. <i>Pandion haliaëtus</i> . | 12. <i>Turdus viscivorus</i> . | 21. <i>Rallus bailloni</i> . |
| 3. <i>Circus pallidus</i> . | 13. <i>Saxicola aurita</i> . | 22. <i>Fulica cristata</i> . |
| 4. <i>Falco barbarus</i> . | 14. <i>Phyllopneuste trochilus</i> . | 23. <i>Stercorarius catarhactes</i> . |
| 5. — <i>eleonoræ</i> . | 15. <i>Hippolais icterina</i> . | 24. <i>Larus audouini</i> . |
| 6. <i>Strix otus</i> . | 16. <i>Cettia melanopogon</i> . | 25. — <i>gelastes</i> . |
| 7. <i>Hirundo daurica</i> . | 17. <i>Charadrius cantianus</i> . | 26. <i>Anas casarca</i> . |
| 8. <i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i> . | 18. <i>Limosa rufa</i> . | 27. <i>Fuligula ferina</i> . |
| 9. <i>Muscicapa atricapilla</i> . | 19. <i>Tringa temminckii</i> . | 28. — <i>rufina</i> . |
| 10. <i>Alauda lusitanica</i> . | | 29. <i>Podiceps auritus</i> . |
| | | 30. <i>Uria troile</i> . |

colinus, Lath., by Bree and others, have no claim to be Maltese. Barbary Partridges have, it is true, been killed in Malta ; but considerable numbers being brought over from Barbary, it is not improbable that they were fugitives. In 1808 some of these birds were turned out on the rocky islet of Comino, between Malta and Gozo, where they multiplied, but for many years have been extinct. Other necessary corrections will be met with in the following list, in which, as a general rule, I have followed the nomenclature of Degland.

As might naturally be expected, the arrivals of birds chiefly take place at the periods of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, during their migration at the former season to Europe, and at the latter on their return to Africa. Occasional visitors appear during the winter months, and a few in summer. Birds generally arrive and leave at night, and do not usually remain more than one day, thus giving little opportunity of studying their habits. Some species, however, remain a few months on the island, and several of them breed here *en route* to Europe ; whilst flocks, chiefly of Grallatores and Natatores, may be seen passing high in the air, without alighting. Taking into consideration the nature of the island, the absence of forest-trees, the want of rivers and marshes, and the dense population spread over every part of the country, it will be apparent that, even putting aside the crowds of native sportsmen who sally out during the shooting-seasons, there is little inducement to migratory birds to prolong their stay.

The influence exerted by the wind over these migrations is doubtless very great, and affords an interesting point for elucidation. Owing to the changeable and local character of the winds in the Mediterranean, it is not easy to lay down any general rules with much precision ; but observation has shown that the following facts are pretty constant. In spring, the Quails and most of the short-winged and smaller birds, and such as are of weak flight, although not unfrequently arriving in calm weather, generally appear during the prevalence of winds from the N.N.W. to S.S.W., and in autumn, with those from the S.S.E. to N.N.E., being probably stopped in their migratory course, and driven to seek rest on our shores. Sometimes a fresh breeze

suddenly springing up from any point will bring with it numbers of the smaller birds ; and if it increase in strength, the larger kinds and those of greater powers of flight will also make their appearance. But there appears to be no rule for birds strong on the wing, which arrive under all circumstances of weather and with winds from all points of the compass.

It will be seen from this list that Malta can boast of none but European forms ; but this is not surprising, when we consider that, from an ornithological point of view, the northern coast of Africa, from Tunis to Cape Spartel, is not much more than a province of Europe, and that the avifauna of Tripoli, although having relations with Egypt, is mostly European.

Malta is so little known to English readers, except in its qualities of a fortress and a coaling-station, and so generally considered as little more than a huge rock, that ornithology in connexion with it seems almost paradoxical. Burnt up and barren under the African sun of its summer, with the rains of winter it rises, like a phoenix, from its ashes to verdure and life. It more especially in spring that in the rocky 'wieds' we find the bright-coloured Bee-eaters, Orioles, and Rollers sheltering themselves from boisterous winds, while the dense foliage of the Carob-trees (*Ceratonia siliqua*) and orange-groves serve them and many others for shade and roosting-places. At this season the Harriers scour the rocks and corn-fields ; the Quails crouch amongst the tangled stalks of the crimson 'Sulla' (*Hedysarum coronarium*) ; the Larks (*Alauda brachydactyla*) hover over the rocky wastes, covered with the aromatic-smelling *Thymus capitatus* ; and the numerous thickets of prickly pear (*Cactus opuntia*), fig- and pomegranate-trees, provide resting-places for Warblers. The air is perfumed by thousands of wild flowers ; here and there rises a tall palm ; and the Arab houses, language, and origin of the inhabitants indicate, despite Acts of Parliament and a European fauna, Malta's alliance with Africa and the East.

1. NEOPHRON PERCNOPTERUS. (Egyptian Vulture.)

Aikla, Maltese.

This is the only species of Vulture which I have observed in Malta, and it is merely an accidental visitor. A specimen in my

collection was killed on the east coast of the island on the 30th September, 1861. It appeared to be a bird of the year, and on dissection proved to be a female.

2. *AQUILA HELIACA*. (Imperial Eagle.)

The capture of one specimen is recorded in Signor Schembri's Catalogue.

3. *AQUILA NÆVIA*. (Spotted Eagle.)

A bird, believed to be of this species, but mistaken for a young Golden Eagle, was shot in September 1859; and another, a male, was killed on the 18th October, 1862, and kindly sent to me by Dr. Gulia, the author of several works on the local zoology and botany.

4. *PANDION HALIAËTUS*. (Osprey.)

Arpa, Maltese.

Although by no means common, this bird not unfrequently shows itself, in spring and autumn, on the coast and in our creeks and harbours. One was shot, several years ago, at the head of the Marsamuscetto Harbour, with a fine mullet in its talons, which was also taken. Two others were observed at different times in the same locality by W. C. P. Medlycott, Esq.; and I am informed of a fourth which was seen in the Great Harbour on the 28th October, 1860. A fifth was killed at St. Julian's, on the 15th October, 1861. It had just caught a mullet, of two pounds' weight, and retired to the shore to feast on it. I have a specimen which was taken alive at sea, on the rigging of a ship, about a hundred miles to the eastward of Cape Passaro. Two or three were seen, in the spring of this year (1863), in the Marsamuscetto Harbour.

5. *CIRCAËTUS GALLICUS*. (Short-toed Eagle.)

Very rare, and not of annual occurrence. A fine specimen in my collection was killed at Gozo, at the end of August 1857.

6. *PERNIS APIVORUS*. (Honey Buzzard.)

Kucciarda, Maltese.

Passes annually in March, April, and May, and again in September and October, and is not uncommon. Flocks of six to a dozen are sometimes seen migrating together.

7. *MILVUS REGALIS*. (Common Kite.)*Falkun*, Maltese.

Very rare. Said by Schembri to breed in Gozo; but I have not been able to obtain any confirmation of this fact.

8. *MILVUS NIGER*. (Black Kite.)*Astun*, Maltese.

Very rare.

9. *CIRCUS RUFUS*. (Marsh Harrier.)

Bū-ghadam (meaning "the father of bones"—a name given by the Maltese to the different species of this genus, in reference to their great osseous development).

The Marsh Harrier is pretty common in spring and autumn, commencing to appear, in the former season, in March, and in the latter in September. It may then be seen, with the other Harriers, hunting the rocks and fields for quails, lizards, insects, and small birds. Harriers will turn at the sound of a quail-call, and the Maltese sportsmen often use it to draw them within shot.

10. *CIRCUS CYANEUS*. (Hen Harrier.)

Bū-ghadam abiad ("white father of bones"), adult male; *Bū-ghadam*, female and young, Maltese.

Visits us at the same time as the preceding species. A circumstance regarding this bird is worthy of remark. Although I have closely examined as many as thirty females in one season, all exhibiting the white rump, or having it very slightly spotted, I have never met with an adult male.

11. *CIRCUS CINERACEUS*. (Montagu's Harrier.)

Bū-ghadam abiad, adult male; *Bū-ghadam*, female and young, Maltese.

Much less common than the other Harriers. Appears at the same seasons.

12. *CIRCUS PALLIDUS*. (Pale-chested Harrier.)

Bū-ghadam abiad, adult male; *Bū-ghadam*, female and young, Maltese.

This is perhaps the commonest of the Maltese Harriers, and

arrives at the same seasons as the others. It is most abundant in April, when it is a conspicuous feature on a spring morning, gliding noiselessly over the open country in quest of insects, lizards, and small birds, the remains of which I have frequently found in its maw. In a large series which I have collected of these birds, the grey bars over the rump are very distinctly marked in the adult males, some of which have the chest and all the under part of the body of a pure white; others have the chest pale grey; while others, again, probably immature males, have the chest marked with more or less fine brown striæ.

13. *ASTUR NISUS*. (Sparrow-Hawk.)

Falkett, Maltese.

Pretty common in spring and autumn, and seen occasionally throughout the summer and winter. It is most frequently met with in October and November.

14. ? *ASTUR GABAR*. (Little Red-billed Hawk.)

This African and rare European bird was said by the late Mr. Hugh Strickland (*vide* Bree, vol. i. p. 52) to have been found in Malta; and I admit it here on his authority.

15. *ASTUR PALUMBARIUS*. (Goshawk.)

According to Schembri, occasionally seen in the summer and autumn months; but I have never met with it myself.

16. *FALCO PEREGRINUS*. (Peregrine Falcon.)

Bies, Maltese.

Appears in spring and autumn, and occasionally at other seasons. I have a female which was caught in a net on the 26th December, 1860. A young male in my collection was killed on the 23rd October, 1861, and a female was taken alive on the 1st November of the same year. The Peregrine has been known to breed in precipitous rocks on the south coast of Malta and Gozo. For several years a pair nested and brought up their young in an inaccessible cliff near Casal Zurrigo.

17. ? *FALCO BARBARUS*, Linn.

Syn. *F. punicus*, Gen. Levaillant.

A specimen of this interesting bird was, according to 'The Ibis'

(1859, p. 159), shot in Malta by Colonel Drummond-Hay. I wrote to Mr. Tristram, the author of the statement in 'The Ibis,' and he very kindly informed me that Colonel Drummond-Hay fancied the bird shot by him was a small Peregrine; but Mr. Tristram thinks he is mistaken. Under these circumstances, I admit the bird on probation only.

18. *FALCO SUBBUTEO*. (Hobby.)

Bies, Maltese.

Not uncommon in spring and autumn. As is the case with nearly all the birds of passage, the Hobby is much scarcer in some years than in others. In the autumn of 1862 I could not obtain a single specimen.

19. *FALCO ELEONORÆ*. (Eleonora Falcon.)

Mr. Tristram kindly informs me that a specimen of this rare bird was shot in Malta by Colonel Drummond-Hay, and is in his (Colonel Drummond-Hay's) collection.

20. *FALCO LITHOFALCO*. (Merlin.)

Spagnolett or *Seker*, Maltese.

Not uncommon in spring and autumn, particularly in the latter season, when both old and young appear.

21. *FALCO VESPERTINUS*. (Orange-legged Hobby.)

Spagnolett-ekhal or *Vespertin*, Maltese.

This pretty little Hawk also visits us in the vernal and autumnal periods of migration, and in some years in much larger numbers than in others. It is sometimes to be met with in small flocks, when they will allow repeated shots to be fired at them without taking alarm. In this way I have killed three or four in a few minutes out of a flock of twenty, and might, I dare say, have killed many others. An adult male, belonging to Dr. Leith Adams, was caught in a platform-net, while in the act of stooping at a decoy Yellow Wagtail.

22. *FALCO TINNUNCULUS*. (Kestrel.)

Spagnolett, adult male; *Seker*, female, Maltese.

Common in spring and autumn. Breeds here in the cliffs and fortifications in May, and a few pairs are to be seen all the year.

23. *FALCO CENCHRIS*. (Lesser Kestrel.)

Spagnolett, adult male ; *Seker*, female and young, Maltese.

Not uncommon in April and May, and passes sometimes in flocks of nearly a hundred ; but is not so often seen as *F. tinnunculus*. I have also obtained it in autumn.

24. *STRIX PSILODACTYLA*. (Sparrow-Owl.)

Kokka, Maltese.

Merely accidental. Specimens obtained in Malta were sent by Signor Schembri to the late Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte, and determined by that eminent naturalist. But we cannot help thinking that there must have been some confusion here in the nomenclature, and that the specimens were more probably *Athene noctua*, var. *meridionalis*.

25. *STRIX FLAMMEA*. (Barn Owl.)

Barbagianni, Maltese.

A few of these birds are to be seen at all seasons, for the most part about the battlements of Valletta and the Three Cities, where they breed in the ruined walls. Fresh arrivals appear to take place in spring and autumn. They are sometimes observed to strike at fish, like an Osprey.

26. *STRIX BRACHYOTUS*. (Short-eared Owl.)

Omm-issubien, Maltese.

Very common in spring and autumn, and has been known to breed here. Individuals are taken throughout the winter, when the plumage generally becomes of a lighter hue, mixed with white ; in one specimen the under parts were almost pure white.

27. *STRIX OTUS*. (Long-eared Owl.)

Looking over some skins collected in Malta by Dr. Leith Adams, 22nd Regiment, I observed one of these birds ticketed "Malta, 12th October 1861." He kindly gave it to me, and I have much pleasure in recording this species, I believe for the first time, as a visitor to Malta. There is a specimen in the Malta University Museum, probably taken in this island, but no locality is mentioned.

28. *STRIX SCOPS*. (Scops Owl.)

Kokka, Maltese.

Very plentiful in the seasons of its migrations, and by far the

commonest Owl found here. It commences arriving towards the end of February or beginning of March, and continues passing till May, reappearing in September, October, and November. It is sold in the market in great numbers, with Nightjars (*Caprimulgus europæus*) and other birds for the table, and is considered good eating by the natives. It is easily tamed, and becomes very familiar in captivity. A few probably winter here, as individuals are taken in December and January. In 1862-63 I obtained nearly a dozen specimens in the market, at different times in these months.

29. *YUNX TORQUILLA*. (Wryneck.)

Sultan-issummiem (King of the Quails) or *Bū-lebbiet* (Father of Crouchers), Maltese.

One of the earliest visitors in spring and autumn. Occasionally, but very rarely, met with in winter.

30. *CUCULUS CANORUS*. (Cuckoo.)

Kuku or *Dakkuka Kahla*, adult; *Sultan-il-gammiem*, young.

Common in spring and autumn. Arrives rather later than the foregoing species, but generally precedes the Doves. Its well-known call is occasionally heard amongst the carob-trees in the valleys, when not molested by the countless sportsmen who infest every ornithological quarter in the island.

31. *CUCULUS GLANDARIUS*. (Great Spotted Cuckoo.)

An exceedingly rare species here. I only know of three specimens shot in Malta. One of these was killed at Sliema, in May 1854.

32. *LOXIA CURVIROSTRA*. (Crossbill.)

Only an accidental visitor. It has generally been seen in September or October. I have a male which was shot, with another (supposed to be a female), in October 1861; and another obtained in October of this year (1863).

33. *PYRRHULA EUROPEA*. (Bullfinch.)

This is another very rare bird here. The only cases of its occurrence which have come to my knowledge are two caught in March 1835, another in 1840, and a fourth some years afterwards (Schembri). Its presence may therefore be considered quite accidental.

34. PYRRHULA GITHAGINEA. (Vinous Grosbeak.)

Trumbettier, Maltese.

A few of these birds are taken annually, generally from October to March. One was caught in the last week of October 1860, and another in November 1862. It soon becomes very tame in captivity. Its note is like the sound of a penny trumpet, from which it derives its Maltese name.

35. PYRRHULA ERYTHRINA. (Scarlet Grosbeak.)

Schembri records the capture of two examples on the 25th December, 1839, under the name of *Fringilla incerta*—a pseudo species, now recognized as the young of *P. erythrina*.

36. PYRRHULA SERINUS. (Serin Finch.)

Apparell, Maltese.

Very common in October, and stays the winter. Often kept as a cage-bird, and crosses with the Canary. Its joyous song may be heard in places where there are trees. The note is louder than the Siskin's, and more vociferous, as if several individuals were joining in concert.

37. COCCOTHAUSTES VULGARIS. (Hawfinch.)

Ghasfur-ta-Zebbug, Maltese.

November and December. Pretty common in some years, rare in others.

38. CHLOROSPIZA CHLORIS. (Greenfinch.)

Verdun, Maltese.

Common in flocks in the winter. I have never seen the North-African Greenfinch (*C. aurantiiventris*) in Malta.

39. PASSER SALICICOLA. (Spanish Sparrow*.)

Ghasfur-tal-beit, Maltese.

It appears to me doubtful whether the birds known as the Spanish and Italian Sparrows are sufficiently distinct to be considered separate species. The principal difference recognized by authors,

* The specific term *hispaniolensis* given by Temminck to this Sparrow is very objectionable, *Hispaniola* being a term usually applied to the island of St. Domingo, not to Spain. Again, I have never seen this form in Spain, and I do not believe it occurs there. The ordinary Sparrow of Spain is certainly *P. domesticus*. On the other hand, Vieillot's term *salicicola*, used in Bonaparte's *Conspectus*, combines the two merits of priority and applicability.—ED.

and which, according to some, constitutes them distinct species, is the presence in *P. salicicola* of lateral black streaks, which are absent in *P. italicus*. In Malta there are both these varieties; that with streaks, however, is by far the most common, the other being rarely met with. But in a collection of forty or fifty specimens I have found intermediate birds having the streaks more or less visible, so that a series may be formed with gradations so imperceptible that it is quite impossible to draw the line of demarcation. In other respects I can discover no important points of difference, except perhaps in depth of colour,—that with the striæ most distinctly marked being a somewhat more handsome-looking bird. These remarks apply only to the males; in the females I can find no difference whatever. Both kinds breed and associate in the same localities, and in habits are precisely the same, constructing their nests in holes in the house both in town and country, in the walls of the fortifications, and in the rocks on the coast. Now, should these Sparrows be considered *two* distinct species that interbreed and produce a hybrid progeny, or one species subject to variation in the matter of streaks? I think, for all purposes of science they should be considered as one.

A large collection of skins of birds obtained by Dr. Leith Adams and myself at different seasons, and from different parts of Malta and Gozo, showing these gradations, was submitted to Sir William Jardine. After carefully comparing them with numerous specimens from various parts of the world, Sir William has kindly given his opinion thereon, which entirely confirms the ideas I had formed on the subject.

Sir William Jardine writes—"All the Sparrows sent to me from Malta are *Pyrgita italica* (Vieill.) 1817, and = *P. salicaria* sive *hispaniolensis*."

I may here mention that, after the breeding-season, the bright chestnut-colour of the head of the Maltese Sparrow becomes sprinkled with a greyish or sand-colour, the deep black of the beak changes to horn-colour with a tinge of yellow about the base, much of the black about the throat and flanks disappears, and the whole plumage is duller.

With reference to the distinctions between this Sparrow

(*Passer salicicola*) and *Passer domesticus* (not found in Malta), Sir William Jardine observes, in the letter above quoted:—

“*Pyrgita domestica*, so far as I have yet seen, is distinct from the above. The females are easily distinguished from each other; and the males in some states, and when viewed in certain positions only, cannot be easily separated. I have placed three specimens before me on their backs, two British and one Maltese, and in that position they appear exactly similar; but when turned with the back uppermost, you never find in *P. domestica* the base of the feathers of the centre of the crown of the deep chestnut of the Maltese species, although that part in the latter may be almost as grey from the long tips of the feathers covering the chestnut. The deep-chestnut head and dashes of black on the breast and flanks indicate the breeding-state. In winter specimens (Nov.), the crown, &c., appears nearly grey until the feathers are separated, when the chestnut appears. The Malta Sparrow is equal to that of the South of Europe, and seems to represent that of North Europe—our *P. domestica*, and has as good claims to be a species as nine-tenths of the birds that are acknowledged. It does not appear you have *P. domestica* at all in Malta, and of course there can be no interbreeding.”

I must observe, however, that *Passer domesticus* is, notwithstanding, a common bird further south than Malta, as I have seen several specimens killed by Dr. Leith Adams, and others by Mr. S. Stafford Allen, in Egypt, and Capt. Loche includes it in his Birds of Algeria. Mr. Medlycott writes to me from Gibraltar that he found it there, and did not see *P. salicicola*.

40. PASSER MONTANUS. (Tree Sparrow.)

I know of only one specimen having been taken, many years ago, and which is now in the collection of Signor Schembri. He begs me to correct an error he fell into, in saying that this species bred in Malta.

41. PASSER PETRONIA. (Rock Sparrow.)

It is only at long intervals of time that a bird of this species is met with here. I obtained one, which was taken alive on the 23rd November, 1862; it died after about a month's confinement.

42. FRINGILLA CÆLEBS. (Chaffinch.)

Spunsun, Maltese.

Flocks of Chaffinches arrive in October, and a good many stay the winter. On the approach of spring, all disappear. I have never met with the Algerian form, *F. spodiogenia*.

43. FRINGILLA MONTIFRINGILLA. (Bramble Finch.)

Spunsun selvag, Maltese.

Rather rare; but a few are taken nearly every year, in October and November.

44. CARDUELIS ELEGANS. (Goldfinch.)

Gardil, Maltese.

Not very common. Arrives in October, and again in April and May. A few are to be found in the winter months. Has been known to breed here. Numbers of young birds are imported from Sicily in August.

45. CARDUELIS SPINUS. (Siskin.)

Ecora, Maltese.

This bird also makes its appearance in October and November, and a few specimens are taken every year. In some years they are much more plentiful than in others. It is often crossed with the Canary by the native bird-fanciers.

46. CANNABINA LINOTA. (Linnet.)

Gioin, or *Gioin tal warda* or *tal warda bianca*, Maltese.

Very common from October till March. Most of them depart before the males assume the crimson breast and forehead of the nuptial plumage; but a few remain to breed.

47. EMBERIZA CIRLUS. (Cirl Bunting.)

I have what appears to be a female of this species, taken on the 12th November, 1862. Signor Schembri possesses a male, which was captured on the 20th November, 1839.

48. EMBERIZA CIA. (Meadow Bunting.)

Kanal salvag, Maltese.

This is also a very rare bird. It visits the island occasionally, in the fall of the year and in winter. One was taken alive in January 1863, and appeared very lively in captivity, taking

hemp and other seeds readily. It lived till the following August, when, like most pets, it came to an untimely end.

49. *EMBERIZA HORTULANA*. (Ortolan Bunting.)

Ortulan, Maltese.

Not uncommon in some years. It appears in spring and autumn—in March and April in the former, and in September and October in the latter season. It is fond of bathing itself in pools formed by the rain in the rocks.

50. *EMBERIZA SCHÆNICLUS*. (Reed Bunting.)

This is another of the Buntings, which only at long and irregular intervals favours us with a visit. I obtained one on the 13th November, 1860, and another on the 14th November, 1861.

51. *EMBERIZA MILIARIA*. (Common Bunting.)

Duraïsa, Maltese.

This well-known bird is more or less common during the greater part of the year. It is especially abundant in the breeding-season, in March, April, and May, when its nest is one of the commonest of the few found here.

52. *EMBERIZA NIVALIS*. (Snow Bunting.)

Schembri mentions two individuals having been taken alive, in the autumn of 1840, by a man netting for Larks.

53. *REGULUS CRISTATUS*. (Golden-crested Regulus.)

Ziemel, Maltese.

54. *REGULUS IGNICAPILLUS*. (Fire-crested Regulus.)

Ziemel, Maltese.

Both these species have been taken in the winter months; and I have a specimen of the Fire-crested Regulus which was shot by Mr. J. Horne on the 5th November, 1860. They both appear to be somewhat rare, although no doubt they often escape detection.

55. *CORVUS FRUGILEGUS*. (Rook.)

Corvu or *Ciaulun*, Maltese.

A bird of passage in October and November, when it generally appears in small flocks. In the winters of 1861–62 and 1862–63 it was very common, and remained on the island several months, associating with Jackdaws and Starlings. This year I

observed it till the beginning of April, when it disappeared, probably having taken its departure northward to breed.

56. *CORVUS MONEDULA*. (Jackdaw.)

Ciaula or *Kola*, Maltese.

One of our resident birds, and is to be seen at all seasons all over the island, being most plentiful on the south and south-western parts, where the rugged cliffs afford it excellent and secure places for nidification. It has very much increased in numbers of late years. Formerly it was a rare thing to see a Jackdaw within a mile of the town; now it breeds freely in the fortifications of Valletta, in company with a number of semi-wild Pigeons, and may sometimes be seen resting on the tops of the houses in the middle of the town. It is asserted somewhere that the Jackdaw is an importation of the Knights of St. John; but this appears to be rather apocryphal. I have never seen *Corvus dauricus* of authors in Malta.

57. *PICA CAUDATA*. (Magpie.)

Ciaula baida, Maltese.

Schembri informs us that one of these birds was shot on the 7th October, 1839, probably a straggler blown off the southern coast of Sicily, where it exists in great numbers.

58. *STURNUS VULGARIS*. (Starling.)

Sturnell, Maltese.

Common in September and October, and stays the winter.

59. *STURNUS UNICOLOR*. (Sardinian Starling.)

Schembri includes this species, from two specimens shot out of a flock of five or six many years ago.

60. *PASTOR ROSEUS*. (Rose-coloured Pastor.)

This elegant species is rare here, and visits us very irregularly. Examples have been taken in spring, autumn, and winter. A specimen was killed on the 7th August, 1855, at Citta Vecchia, the old capital of the island; and since then three or four others have been obtained—three of them at the Marsa, at the head of the Grand Harbour. The fourth was a bird of the year, which I purchased in the market in the first week of November 1858. Since then I have not seen any others.

61. *HIRUNDO RUSTICA*. (Common Swallow.)*Huttafa* or *Hawiefa*, Maltese.

Arrives in great numbers early in March, and may be seen in town and country till May. At the end of August, on its return southward, it again makes its appearance, and is plentifully spread over the island till October. Specimens of the variety *H. rustica orientalis* have also been taken.

62. *HIRUNDO DAÛRICA* (Linn.). (Rufous Swallow.)Syn. *Hirundo rufula*, Temminck.

This species appears to be the Common Swallow of Palestine and Greece; and as it is an occasional visitor in Algeria, Sicily, Italy, and south of France, I was long of opinion it would turn up in Malta; but it was not until the 5th April, 1862, that I had the pleasure of seeing it. Out shooting with Dr. Leith Adams, at the Salini, we distinctly recognized three individuals, of which Dr. Adams succeeded in shooting one. We noticed at the same time *H. rustica* and *H. riparia*, of which I shot two or three. A strong easterly wind was blowing; indeed, easterly winds had prevailed for some days, to which probably was owing the presence of *H. daurica* so far to the westward of its usual habitat. A day or two subsequently, Dr. Adams obtained another specimen from the same place, and saw several others. There are two specimens in the Malta University, evidently taken many years ago, but no locality or time is given.

63. *HIRUNDO URBICA*. (House Martin.)*Huttafa* or *Hawiefa*, Maltese.

The Martin is as common here as the Chimney Swallow, and is to be seen at the same seasons. It is perhaps even more plentiful in the towns and fortifications. It also remains with us part of the winter, when *H. rustica* has departed.

64. *HIRUNDO RIPARIA*. (Sand Martin.)*Huttafa* or *Hawiefa*, Maltese.

Also common in spring and autumn, but arrives a little later. The first I saw in 1862 was on the 5th April.

65. *HIRUNDO RUPESTRIS*. (Rock Swallow.)*Huttafa* or *Hawiefa*, Maltese.

Schembri says it is rather common both in its April and Sep-

tember migrations. It can hardly be very common, as, although I have looked out pretty closely for it, I have never met with a single one.

66. *CYPSELUS APUS*. (Swift.)

Rundun, Maltese.

Commences arriving from the south in March and April, and remains with us till August, breeding in the precipitous rocks and caverns on the coast and in the walls of the fortifications. Repasses in September. In spring and summer it is plentifully distributed all over the island, but disappears as autumn advances.

67. *CYPSELUS MELBA*. (White-bellied Swift.)

Rundun ta Zaccu baida, Maltese.

Much less common than its congener. A few are annually seen in spring and autumn; but it makes no lengthened stay, and does not breed here. Mr. Tristram and Mr. Medlycott found it breeding in the island of Sardinia in May, in company with the Lesser Kestrel (*Falco cenchris*).

68. *CAPRIMULGUS EUROPEUS*. (Nightjar.)

Bukraik or *Bukarak*, Maltese.

Plentiful towards the end of March and in April and May. Great numbers are shot in these months for the table. As many as one hundred and thirty have been shot in a day by one gun. In spring they are most abundant in south-westerly winds after a dark night. They are generally found asleep in the daytime on the branches of the carob-trees, invariably arranging their bodies and long tails in a line with the branches. Thus, being of the same colour as the bark, they are very difficult to perceive. They are also found reposing on stones and on open rocky ground. In Gozo the country-people have a way of snaring them with a noose at the end of a stick. I have often seen these birds before sunrise, and again in the evening after sunset, hunting for insects on the wing. They repass in September and October, at the same time as the Scops Owl.

69. *CAPRIMULGUS RUFICOLLIS*. (Rufous-necked Goatsucker.)

A specimen of this bird was shot at Imtahlep, on the south-west of Malta, at the end of May 1860. The preserved skin

fell into my possession a few days afterwards. This is the only instance of this species having been obtained in this island.

70. *MUSCICAPA GRISOLA*. (Spotted Flycatcher.)

Zanzarel, Maltese.

Very common in spring and autumn, and arrives later than its congeners. It is one of the last to leave us in the spring.

71. *MUSCICAPA ATRICAPILLA*. (Pied Flycatcher.)

Zanzarel, Maltese.

Another of our spring and autumn visitors. Although often seen in the valleys and by roadsides in the neighbourhood of trees, it is not so numerous as *M. grisola*.

72. *MUSCICAPA ALBICOLLIS*. (White-necked Flycatcher.)

Zanzarel, Maltese.

This non-British species arrives and departs about the same time as *M. atricapilla*, but is less common. Schembri, in his Catalogue, has confounded these two birds, as only *M. albicollis* is given, to which is attached the English name of "Pied Flycatcher."

73. *LANIUS EXCUBITOR*. (Grey Shrike.)

74. *LANIUS MERIDIONALIS*. (Great Grey Shrike.)

75. *LANIUS MINOR*. (Lesser Grey Shrike.)

Merely accidental visitors. Of the first, *L. excubitor*, one specimen is recorded by Schembri. Of the second, *L. meridionalis*, several specimens have been taken. I have two in my possession—one of them a female, in the plumage of the adult male, killed on the 12th February, 1861. Of *Lanius minor* I know of no examples except those mentioned by Schembri, taken upwards of twenty years ago, one of which he has still in his possession.

76. *LANIUS RUFUS*. (Woodchat Shrike.)

Cacciamendula or *Būghiddiem* (Father of Biters), Maltese.

The Common Shrike of Malta, and may be seen during a great part of the year. Perched on the uppermost twig of some tree, its shining white breast forms one of the most conspicuous objects in the ornithological landscape in April. On the first

appearance of danger it flies off to another and more distant tree, and taking up a similarly elevated position, scans the country round till the danger which had excited its alarm has passed away. It breeds here in May and June, constructing a compact and well-formed nest in the fork of a carob or almond tree. Its affection for, and the courage it displays in the protection of, its young are remarkable. Wary as it is at other times, on these occasions it seems to lose all fear; uttering piercing cries, it will fly close round the head of the intruder, and actually make a feint of dashing in his face. In September fresh arrivals take place, but all disappear before winter. In autumn those taken are generally birds of the year.

77. *ALAUDA ARVENSIS*. (Skylark.)

Ahuet, Maltese.

Abundant in flocks in October, when great numbers are taken in nets and shot. A few remain the winter, till the beginning of February. It repasses in March and April, but in less numbers than in autumn. I have not heard it sing here. My collection contains a curious cream-coloured variety of this species, with ashy markings on the back and wings.

78. *ALAUDA CRISTATA*. (Crested Lark.)

Rare; in March and October a few are sometimes taken.

79. *ALAUDA ARBOREA*. (Wood Lark.)

Ciuklaita (Rattle), Maltese.

Rather less rare than the preceding species, but it cannot be considered common. Appears at the same seasons. I have also seen it exhibited for sale with Skylarks.

80. *ALAUDA BRACHYDACTYLA*. (Short-toed Lark.)

Bilbla, Maltese.

This is one of the most characteristic birds of Malta in spring, and does duty amongst English residents as the Skylark, with which it has some habits in common. In the breeding-season, from April to June, it is abundantly spread in pairs all over the island, and the song of the male is then constantly heard encouraging its mate in the labours of incubation. Its mode of ascending in the air is different from that of the Skylark, consisting of a succession of jerks, which may be peculiar to the

species. It delights in the wastes and desert tracts of the island. At the commencement of autumn it gathers together in flocks, which appear to be joined by numerous fresh comers from the north ; but all speed away long before the winter sets in.

81. *ALAUDA LUSITANICA* (Gmel.). (Cream-coloured Lark.)

The capture of a single specimen, of which the skin is in the possession of Signor Schembri, entitles it to a place in this catalogue.

82. *ALAUDA CALANDRA*. (Calandra Lark.)

Calandra, Maltese.

An annual visitor in March and October, and a few may not unfrequently be detected by their larger size amongst flocks of Skylarks. It cannot, however, be said to be very common. Numbers are yearly imported from Sicily, and kept as cage-birds for their song, which is too powerful for a room. A good songster is much esteemed, and fetches a high price.

83. *ANTHUS RICHARDI*. (Richard's Pipit.)

Bilblun selvag, Maltese.

Accidental. In the spring of 1853 I was so lucky as to shoot one of two which appeared on Fort Manoel Island. My attention was attracted by its exceedingly sharp and powerful note. Another is recorded as having been taken in October.

84. *ANTHUS CAMPESTRIS*. (Tawny Pipit.)

Bilblun, Maltese.

Common from March to May, and again in the autumn. I have never seen it in winter.

85. *ANTHUS PRATENSIS*. (Meadow Pipit.)

Pespus tal giargir, Maltese.

Exceedingly plentiful in October and November, and commences arriving when the Short-toed Larks disappear. A good many stay the winter. Passes again in March.

86. *ANTHUS CERVINUS*. (Red-throated Pipit.)

That no notice has been taken of this species as a visitor to Malta is probably owing to its having been considered only a variety. The first specimen that fell into my hands was shot on the 7th April, 1860, by Signor Pace, who kindly gave it to me.

Since then I have seen and shot many individuals. This has generally been in April, but I have also observed it in autumn. Arrives in small flocks. It is interesting to notice the gradation in depth of colour of the throat that a series of these birds presents, sliding into the plumage of *A. pratensis*.

87. *ANTHUS ARBOREUS*. (Tree Pipit.)

Tis, Maltese.

Very common; arrives in small flocks in spring and autumn, which soon get dispersed over the country. It departs in May, to return in September and October, a few passing the whole or part of the winter with us.

88. *ANTHUS SPINOLETTA* (Linn.). (Water Pipit.)

I have only seen one specimen, which I shot by the sea-side, on Fort Manoel Island, on the 5th November, 1860.

89. *MOTACILLA ALBA* (Linn.). (White Wagtail.)

Zic-zak or *Zakak*, Maltese.

Common in autumn, and stays the winter; is seen generally in small flocks, or solitary, by the sides of pools and in newly ploughed fields. Leaves early in spring, and is rarely observed in the breeding-plumage. *M. yarrelli* of Gould was, I believe, erroneously stated to have been found here.

90. *MOTACILLA BOARULA*. (Grey Wagtail.)

Zakak ta del (Zakak of shady places), Maltese.

Arrives about the middle of September, and is common in October, a few remaining till March. Always solitary or in couples, it is very partial to shady spots by the side of running water and the sea-shore. Breeds here in April.

91. *MOTACILLA FLAVA*, Linn. (Yellow Wagtail.)

Kappamosk or *Garnell*, Maltese.

Commences arriving in flocks about the middle of March, and is seen again in September, associated in both seasons with *Motacilla cinereocapilla*, Bp. (Grey-headed Yellow Wagtail), which is not quite so plentiful. Again, in the same flocks with these may be found *M. melanocephala*, Bp. (Black-headed Yellow Wagtail), which is the rarest. The Maltese bird-catchers call the last *Obrosk*, from a real or fancied grating peculiarity

in its note, both in spring and autumn, which they consider different from that of *M. flava* and *M. cinereocapilla*. If this be true, it is rather an important fact in favour of its being a distinct species. They are all caught in nets during their migrations, and are frequently kept in shops and houses for killing flies.

92. *ORIOLOUS GALBULA*. (Golden Oriole.)

Taira safra (Yellow Bird), adult; *Taira hadra* (Green Bird), female and young, Maltese.

This strikingly beautiful bird is a regular visitor in spring, and arrives in small flocks. It would probably breed here, if not disturbed. It is very common sometimes in Sant' Antonio Gardens, and is very destructive to the fruit of the Japan Medlars (*Mespilus japonica*), of which it appears to be exceedingly fond. Occasionally, adult females, probably old birds, are found in the brilliant plumage of the males. A few also pass in September.

93. *TURDUS MERULA*. (Blackbird.)

Malvitz isued (Black Thrush), Maltese.

Arrives annually in October and November. A few remain the winter, individuals having been taken in December, January, February, and even in March. Leaves in spring.

94. *TURDUS TORQUATUS*. (Ring Ouzel.)

Malvitz tas-sidra baida (White-chested Thrush), Maltese.

Arrives about the same time as the other Thrushes, but it is one of the rarest. Nevertheless a winter seldom passes without some being taken.

95. *TURDUS MUSICUS*. (Song Thrush.)

Malvitz, Maltese.

Very abundant in October and November, and a few continue to be seen till December. It repasses in March.

96. *TURDUS VISCIVORUS*. (Missel Thrush.)

Malvitzun (Large Thrush).

A specimen was obtained by me on the 1st February, 1861, and another by Mr. J. Horne on the 2nd December the same year. I obtained a third in the winter of 1862, and two others in the autumn of this year (1863).

97. *TURDUS PILARIS*. (Fieldfare.)*Malvitzun*, Maltese.

The latest of the Thrushes which visit us in the winter. It is seldom seen before January, when a few are taken every year. It generally lingers in the island a few weeks.

98. *TURDUS ILIACUS*. (Redwing.)*Malvitz*, Maltese.

Rare; does not make its appearance every year. In November and December 1861 I obtained two specimens, and Mr. J. Horne another on the 2nd of the latter month.

99. *PETROCINCLA SAXATILIS*. (Rock Thrush.)*Gianbublu*, Maltese.

Arrives early in spring (about the middle of March), generally in pairs, and may be seen till May. It reappears in September, on its voyage southwards.

100. *PETROCINCLA CYANEA*. (Blue Solitary Thrush.)*Meril* or *Ciccu di Diu*, Maltese.

Indigenous. A lover of rocky and solitary places, it not unfrequently approaches the dwellings of man; and it is no uncommon occurrence to see it perched on the corner of some house, giving vent to its melodious but plaintive song, which it also often pours forth on the wing. It is most commonly met with in pairs on the south coast, where it breeds in the high cliffs. It also constructs a loosely formed nest in ruined buildings, in which case its progeny are sure to be taken by the country-lads, who find a ready sale for them in the town as cage-birds. The Blue Thrush becomes strongly attached to the locality in which it has been brought up, and seldom quits it. This affection is also shown in a state of captivity, and it rarely long survives removal to a new and strange place. Many instances of this kind have come under my notice. One is worth mentioning. When the New Market in Valletta was opened, many of the market-people brought with them cages containing these birds from the old market, where they had been reared. One after another of the birds pined away and died, and in a few weeks not one survived the change of locality, yet they were fed by the same hand, and with the same description of food. Almost

fabulous prices are sometimes given for a good songster. An instance is fresh in my memory of a noble lady who considered herself fortunate in securing one for £7 10s., as the owner was very loth to part with it; and two or three pounds is not an unusual price. The male nestlings may easily be distinguished from the females at a very early age by their blue wing-coverts. In confinement they are much subject to a disease of the feet, which generally proves fatal. The Maltese suspend a piece of red cloth and a cowry-shell in its cage, which they consider a certain specific against the "evil eye."

101. *SAXICOLA ÆNANTHE*. (Wheatear.)

Kuda bianca, Maltese.

Abundantly spread over the island in spring and autumn. In the former season it commences to appear in March, and in the latter in August.

102. *SAXICOLA STAPAZINA*. (Russet Wheatear.)

Dumnikan, Maltese.

Comparatively scarce; but a regular annual visitor in spring and autumn. It arrives at the same time as the preceding species, or perhaps a little later. It sometimes perches on the branches of trees—a habit I have never observed in *Saxicola ænanthe*.

103. *SAXICOLA AURITA*. (Eared Wheatear.)

Dumnikan, Maltese.

This bird first came under my notice as a visitor to Malta in 1859. I shot one, in the spring of that year, in St. Julian's Valley. Since then I have met with it annually in spring and autumn, although never in any great numbers. It arrives and departs about the same time as the other Wheatears.

104. *SAXICOLA RUBETRA*. (Whinchat.)

Buciak tal Kudi, Maltese.

Arrives at the same time as the other *Saxicolæ*. In April and May, and again in September, it may be met with almost daily in the fields and open places.

105. *SAXICOLA RUBICOLA*. (Stonechat.)

Buciak, Maltese.

Also arrives in spring and autumn, but is rather more common

than the Whinchat. The Stonechat passes the winter with us, which none of its congeners do. Indeed, one can scarcely move about anywhere in the country in winter without seeing his lively little figure. This difference of habit in migration has also been noticed in England and Scotland, where the Stonechat remains the winter, unlike the Whinchat, which invariably travels south before the inclement season begins.

106. *PHILOMELA LUSCINIA.* (Nightingale.)

Rosignol, Maltese.

The Nightingale visits us in flocks in April and May, and again towards the middle of August and September. It is, in fact, one of the first arrivals in autumn. In spring I have often listened to its thrilling notes, both in the daytime and at night, the songster himself hidden in the dark foliage of the carob-tree. It is, however, more appreciated here for the delicacy of its flesh than the quality of its song. Attempts have been made to keep it in confinement; but it bears captivity ill, and those taken in spring rarely long survive the loss of liberty. Great numbers are taken in nets, which are thrown over a low spreading carob-tree selected for the purpose, and the birds driven from other trees into it,—a mode of capture very successfully adopted for most of the Warblers and other small birds, which are sold in the market under the general name of *beccafichi*.

107. *RUTICILLA PHÆNICURA.* (Redstart.)

Kudiross or *Ta dembu*, Maltese.

Common in spring and autumn, and stays here several weeks during its migrations.

108. *RUTICILLA TITHYS.* (Black Redstart.)

Kudiross isued, Maltese.

In spring and autumn, but not so common as the preceding. I have occasionally seen it when the winter was far advanced.

109. *ERITHACUS RUBECULA.* (Robin.)

Pettiross, Maltese.

The Redbreast is one of our winter residents, arriving at the end of September, and staying till March. Here, as at home, he affects the habitations of man; but not being driven by want,

as in cold climates, he is not so familiar. He is most commonly met with in gardens, and may not unfrequently be heard singing merrily from some housetop, either in town or country.

110. *CYANECULA SUECICA*. (Blue-throated Warbler.)

Very rare; only now and then seen. The two or three I have examined had the pectoral spot very light rufous, or pure white.

111. *ACCENTOR MODULARIS*. (Hedge Accentor.)

Rather rare. I met with it on the 26th November, 1860, and on the 3rd December, same year; and Dr. Adams observed two or three others, of which he obtained one. I have another, which was taken in May 1862. Individuals have also been captured in December and January.

112. *SYLVIA ATRICAPILLA*. (Blackcap.)

Not common; has been observed in January, February, and March, as well as in September and October. I shot two males in February 1859, and a female the following March. Two were taken in October 1858, and one or two others in October 1860. One was obtained in Gozo in January 1861, and two or three more were seen at the same time. I purchased two in the market in the last week of September 1862, and have since obtained two or three others.

113. *SYLVIA HORTENSIS*. (Garden Warbler.)

Beccafik, Maltese.

In April and the middle of August and September, flocks of Garden Warblers visit us on passage; and numbers are netted and brought to market, where they are eagerly sought after for the table; as many as a hundred dozen are sometimes brought in at a time. It is the far-famed *beccafico* of the Italians.

114. *SYLVIA CURRUCA*. (Lesser Whitethroat.)

The capture of a single specimen is recorded in Schembri's Catalogue. Inhabiting the north coast of Africa, as well as Europe, its appearance in Malta is to be expected; but I have never met with one myself.

115. *SYLVIA ORPHEA*. (Orphean Warbler.)

Appears to be rare; I have only seen a single specimen—one

sent in 1858 to Sir W. Jardine by his son, who was serving in one of Her Majesty's ships on this station. Schembri states that a few pass yearly, in March, September, and October. A recent writer on Malta (Tallack) says it is common in the Soldiers' Cemetery at Floriana; but I believe this statement arose from a misunderstanding, and that the Sardinian Warbler (*S. melanocephala*) was meant.

116. SYLVIA CINEREA. (Whitethroat.)

One of the commonest of the *Sylviidae* in spring and autumn.

117. SYLVIA PASSERINA. (Subalpine Warbler.)

This pretty species is a regular visitant in spring and autumn. It is not uncommon in March, April, and September. It varies much in size.

118. SYLVIA CONSPICILLATA. (Spectacled Warbler.)

Ghasfur-el-harrub or *Ghasfur tal Gamiem*, Maltese.

The only one of the Warblers that is a constant resident. It is partial to dry stony places, and selects for its nest low coarse under-shrubs, such as *Inula viscosa* and *Euphorbia dendroides*, which flourish in wild rocky situations. During the time of nidification its vigorous and pleasing song is heard for a considerable distance around, delivered from the topmost branch of a tree, or the apex of a stone, in the vicinity of its nest, over which it sometimes hovers and sings in the manner of the Blue Thrush. It has another note, somewhat like that of the *S. melanocephala*, but less powerful. It is an early breeder, laying four or five eggs, and, I should think, produces two broods in the season, as I have found nests with young in May and June as well as in March. In fine weather it commences singing as early as January. It appears very excited on any one approaching its nest, from which it never wanders far. A favourite place for it is the Soldiers' Cemetery at Floriana, before alluded to, where a search for it will seldom prove unsuccessful. It delights in flitting from tombstone to tombstone, or amongst the under-shrubs and few trees to be found there. It will allow itself to be watched very closely, and reward the observer with strains of music, which, if not of a high order, strike pleasantly on the ear in

an island not much favoured by the song of birds. One of these birds, fed on bread and milk, thrived and sang in confinement.

119. SYLVIA MELANOCEPHALA. (Sardinian Warbler.)

Būsueida, Maltese (in allusion to its black head).

This is another strikingly pretty little Warbler, which visits Malta from southern Europe and northern Africa. It generally appears in the winter months, which has given rise to another local name by which it is also known, *Ghasfur tal Maltemp*, or the "Bird of Bad Weather." It is never very numerous, and in some years is not often met with. The locality mentioned as a good one for the last two species is also a favourite resort of the Sardinian Warbler. When disturbed, it flits along the ground in a slinking manner to the nearest bush, into which it enters so rapidly that it is difficult to catch more than a glimpse of its outspread tail before it disappears from view; and if the bush furnishes a good hiding-place, it will not readily move out again. Its characteristic note is powerful and harsh, resembling the winding of a clock; it has also another note, "*chuck-chuck-chuck*." It is not unfrequently seen amongst thickets of cactus (*Cactus opuntia*), with which this island abounds; and it is also partial to gardens. I have never known it breed here.

120. SYLVIA PROVINCIALIS. (Dartford Warbler.)

Included in Schembri's Catalogue from the capture of a single specimen. Is found in North Africa.

121. PHYLLOPNEUSTE TROCHILUS. (Willow Warbler.)

Bū-fula, Maltese.

A bird of passage in March, April, September, and October. It does not appear to be very common; but in the above seasons I have obtained several specimens—in the latter chiefly the young of the year.

122. PHYLLOPNEUSTE RUFA. (Chiffchaff.)

Bū-fula, Maltese. (Father of a Bean.)

Arriving in autumn, after passing the summer in Europe, the Chiffchaff remains with us all the winter. During that season until spring, when it is joined by new-comers, it is one of the most familiar birds, being generally spread over the country, in

gardens, orange-groves, and places where the carob and other trees afford it shelter and insect food. Careful measurement of numerous specimens taken by myself and sent to me by friends, has shown that the Chiffchaffs found in Malta are generally somewhat smaller than the dimensions, given by authors, of those from northern Europe. Sir William Jardine has also noticed this peculiarity in examples sent to him by Dr. Adams and myself. In other respects they are precisely similar. Half a dozen examples now before me, measured in the flesh, did not exceed 11 centimetres in length; and upwards of a dozen kindly lent me for examination by Dr. Adams were all of the same diminutive size.

123. PHYLLOPNEUSTE SYLVICOLA. (Wood Warbler.)

Bū-fula, Maltese.

Common in spring and autumn. It especially affects fig- and almond-trees when in leaf, the colour of whose foliage mostly assimilates to its own plumage, and renders it not easy of detection when at rest. It is also found in the olive- and carob-trees. I cannot confirm Schembri's statement that it passes the winter in Malta, though I have seen it late in autumn. In this I am supported by Dr. Adams's observations.

124. PHYLLOPNEUSTE BONELLII. (Bonelli's Warbler.)

Bū-fula, Maltese.

A bird of passage in spring and autumn. It is very liable to be confounded with *P. trochilus*, which it much resembles in general appearance, especially in the young birds of autumn, which have more yellow about the under parts than the examples taken in spring. There can be no doubt, however, of their being different species. The eggs, I am informed, are widely different—totally unlike. *A propos* of eggs as indicative of specific distinction and of generic relation, Mr. W. C. P. Medlycott writes to me that he went over several drawers of Mr. Tristram's extensive collection with him, and in many, indeed almost all cases where *Sylvia* were most closely allied in the external characters of form and colour of plumage, the difference between their eggs was most plainly marked. Thus in the present instance in *P. bonellii* the eggs are white, thickly spotted with dark chestnut (closely

resembling those of *P. sylvicola*), while in *P. trochilus* they are much more sparsely spotted with very light chestnut. Again, specific approximation may frequently be traced by the eggs, as in the case of *Cettia cetti*, where its singular eggs seem to mark its affinity to the Indian genus *Prinia*.

In all the Maltese specimens I have examined, I have found the length of the wing, from the carpus to the end of the longest primary, to be about 5 millimetres longer in *P. trochilus* than in *P. bonellii*. There is also a slight difference in the relative length of the wing-feathers.

125. HIPPOLAIS ICTERINA (Gerbe, Rev. Zool. 1844, p. 440, and 1846, p. 433; and Dict. d'Hist. Nat. 1848, xi. p. 237). (Vieillot's Willow Warbler.)

This species, which has been so often confounded with its congener, *H. polyglotta*, is a regular visitor in April, May, September, and October. Although never very numerous, it is far from being rare. I have frequently met with it on the sheltered sides of hills, among fig-trees, and obtained a good many specimens at different times. Owing to its restless disposition, which induces it to be constantly on the move, it is not easy to shoot; yet it is not shy. Schembri, in his 'Catalogue of Maltese Birds,' gives *H. polyglotta*, which I have never seen here, instead of *H. icterina*. There is no reason why that species should not also be observed in Malta; but it appears to me that he has probably mistaken *H. icterina* for it, as the Prince of Canino, who examined most of his specimens, has figured *H. icterina*, in the 'Fauna Italica,' as *H. polyglotta*, and M. De Selys Longchamps made a similar mistake in the 'Faune Belge,' in 1842. M. Gerbe has since so clearly indicated the essential points of difference, that one would think these birds could scarcely be again confounded. *H. icterina* is found in Algeria and other parts of Barbary. I have examined many specimens of it shot by myself, and others sent me by Dr. L. Adams, and they all agree with M. Gerbe's diagnosis in having the first primary longer than the fourth, and nearly equal to the third, the second longest, and the wings in repose reaching to about the middle of the tail. According to M. Gerbe, the wing in *H. polyglotta* does not reach halfway to the tail, and

the first primary is equal, or nearly equal, to the fifth. Dr. Adams tells me that he has seen this bird in May, hunting for flies on the wing, like the true Flycatchers (*Muscicapidæ*), and that its call-note is a harsh creak; but that he had never met with *H. polyglotta*.

126. *AËDON RUBIGINOSA*. (Rufous Sedge Warbler.)

Rare; does not occur annually. It has most often been observed in September. One taken in that month in 1857 lived for some time in captivity.

127. *CALAMOHERPE TURDOÏDES*. (Great Sedge Warbler.)

Baghal (Mule), Maltese.

Not common; but a few are taken every year, in spring and autumn.

128. *CALAMOHERPE ARUNDINACEA*. (Reed Warbler.)

Generally seen in September and October. Mr. J. Horne shot one in the last week of August 1860. Not common.

129. *CETTIA LUSCINOÏDES*. (Savi's Warbler.)

Schembri notices a single specimen, captured in November 1842.

130. *CETTIA MELANOPOGON*. (Moustached Warbler.)

A single example, shot by Dr. L. Adams on the 11th November, 1860, at the Marsa. This specimen is in the possession of Sir William Jardine.

131. *CALOMODYTA PHRAGMITIS*. (Sedge Warbler.)

Not uncommon in April, May, September, and October; but not seen in any great numbers.

132. *LOCUSTELLA FLUVIATILIS*. (River Warbler.)

One specimen noticed by Schembri.

133. *UPUFA EOPS*. (Hoopoe.)

Dakkuka tal pennac, Maltese.

Very common, and a regular visitor in spring and autumn. In both seasons it is one of the earliest arrivals. I have seen it as early as the middle of February and the middle of August. It is said to breed in great numbers in Tripoli.

134. CORACIAS GARRULA. (Roller.)

Karnaclic or *Farrug*, Maltese.

Appears annually in spring and autumn, sometimes in small flocks of five or six. It is common in April and May, a few lingering till June. An instance is recorded of a pair breeding in a ruined house in an unfrequented part of the country. This bird is often called the "Jay," or "Blue Jay," by English residents and visitors; and it is probably owing to some such mistake that Yarrell and other authors have given Malta as a locality of *Garrulus glandarius* (Linn.), which is never seen here.

135. MEROPS APIASTER. (Bee-eater.)

Kirt-el-nahal, Maltese.

In April and May it arrives in large flocks, and its peculiar gurgling note may be heard at a long distance. Towards evening they settle to roost on the carob-trees, and nestle so close to one another that I have known as many as twenty or thirty to be brought down at one shot. Three were seen in 1861 as late as the 7th June. In Gozo they have been observed to lay their eggs in the sand. They reappear in autumn.

136. MEROPS PERSICUS. (Blue-cheeked Bee-eater.)

One example, killed in September 1840, noticed by Schembri.

137. ALCEDO ISPIDA. (Kingfisher.)

Ghasfur ta San Martin, Maltese.

An annual visitor; generally seen about the sea-shore in pairs. Arrives in August and September, and occasionally observed in the winter months. One was killed on the 14th March, 1862. Said to breed here sometimes.

[To be continued.]

IV.—*Five Months in the West Indies.*

By E. CAVENDISH TAYLOR, M.A., F.Z.S.

Part I.—*Trinidad and Venezuela.*

HAVING determined to spend the winter of 1862–63 in the West Indies, I left England the 2nd December, and went to Trinidad, *viâ* St. Thomas, where I remained from December 22nd